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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Kelley White (New Hampshire, USA): from *Salt Suite*

SALT SUITE I: That Moment We Say Yes to the Water

my good hand an oar
my hair a whisper of torn sail

he offered to wash the sand from my feet

one white feather

as if a bowl of fresh water could keep us safe from the sea
death's breath
breathing water
to hold all that stiff salt anger
like a phone call about an angry tooth

is it always our mother forcing us to breathe?
and what are sobs but hunger?
and when the mother comes
to lift the shoulders
to make a cup of her chest

now that you can see a little light
what have you
brought up
from the bottom?

the man with the puffed pink scars down his chest?
iron feathers?

Editor:
- Adam Fieled

Artist Posts

- Chris McCabe (London, UK): from Progress Poems
- P.F.S.: Nine Paintings 2
- P.F.S.: Nine Paintings
- Mary Walker Graham (Boston/Virginia, USA): "On the...
- William Allegrezza (Indiana, USA): "distances"
- Barnaby Smith (New South Wales, Australia): "Dockl...
- Cleveland Wall (Bethlehem, Pa, USA): "Midge"
- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, USA): "Appa...
- In Memory: Larry Sawyer (Chicago!) 1970-2025
- MF of A Revenge: On Steve Halle

Contributors

- Adam Fieled

I Power Blogger

Archives

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what living water?

SALT SUITE II: It Takes a Long Time to Get Past a House

I'd like a jar without sides
I'd like an empty skate
one broken egg, womb warm

"It was the way she welcomed the water,
her thirst, eyes open, gulping great mouth
fulls even as she pushed beneath the skin
and let the it cover her face,
willful, her drunk exhausted
arms, that was the shock,
to see her swallow death, to suck
at death's breast. . ."

(who did this thing? sinking flowers
in the sand?
the stones know where it is safe
to lie)

I'd like an angry shovel
an abandoned umbrella
I'd like a painted stone

SALT SUITE III: A Painted Stone

1.
she drank, her body face
up and staring
that heavy hair
floating
to hold all that stiff
salt anger

the stones know

2008 March 2008 April 2008 May 2008 June 2008 July 2008 October 2008 November 2008 December 2008 February 2009 March 2009 April 2009 May 2009 December 2009 July 2016 November 2016 January 2017 February 2017 June 2017 April 2020 May 2020 July 2020 September 2020 October 2020 February 2021 March 2021 June 2021 July 2021 December 2022 June 2023 August 2023 September 2023 October 2023 November 2023 December 2023 January 2024 February 2024 March 2024 April 2024 May 2024 June 2024 July 2024 September 2024 October 2024 November 2024 December 2024 January 2025 February 2025 March 2025 April 2025

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where it is safe to lie

2.
if I led you to the water,
if I eased you in, back
against the tide, would
you trust me
to keep you breathing?

would I trust you
to breathe?

3.
death's breath
not breathing water

as if a bowl of fresh water
could keep us safe
from the sea

Jeffrey Side (London, UK): The Semantic Limitations of Visual Poetry

In *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, **Louise Rosenblatt** says: 'The poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object or an ideal entity. It happens during a coming-together, a co-penetration, of a reader and a text.' She later elaborates:

The reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of the reader. The transaction will involve not only the past experience but also the present state and present interests or preoccupations of the reader. This suggests the possibility that printed marks on a page may even become different linguistic symbols by virtue of transactions with different readers. Just as knowing is the process linking a knower and a known, so a poem should not be thought of as an object, an entity, but rather as an active process lived through during the relationship between a reader and a text.

For the poem to be experienced as an event in time, the importance of mental activity, or "internalization," in the reader cannot be overestimated. By internalization I mean that part of the reader's response that is able, through

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conscious decision, to minimize the relevance of the text in the hermeneutical process. This is difficult to achieve with poetry in which the artifice (in the form of certain extra-lexical ingredients—such as the visual and acoustic) is fore-grounded at the expense of semantic elements. Such poetry inhibits internalization and is, as **Charles Bernstein** has said, 'concerned only with representing its own mechanisms.'

These elements of artifice are, like painting and music, non-semantic and, as such, they preclude an exegetical response that is distinct from the hermeneutical procedures employed in the reception of non-representational visual art and music. In 'The Dollar Value of Poetry' Charles Bernstein advocates a poetics that is grounded in experiences that are released in the reading. In this sense, then, poetry is seen as being untranslatable and un-paraphrasable for 'what is untranslatable is the sum of all the specific conditions of the experience (place, time, order, light, mood, position, to infinity) made available by reading'. Bernstein sees this untranslatability as being misunderstood by advocates of 'certain "concretist" tendencies, who see in radical concrete procedures the manifestation of untranslatability at its fullest flowering'. As Bernstein, stresses 'what is not translatable is the experience released in the reading'. He goes on to say that 'in so far as some "visual poems" move toward making the understanding independent of the language it is written in, i.e., no longer requiring translation, they are, indeed, no longer so much writing as works of visual art. In 'Words and Pictures,' he emphasizes the linguistic and semantic criteria necessary for any aesthetic of viewer/reception theory to be plausible: 'visual experience is only validated when accompanied by a logico-verbal explanation'. For Bernstein, then, as he says in 'Thought's Measure,' 'there is meaning only in terms of language'.

Furthermore, he is well aware of the dangers of too much foregrounding of artifice when he writes in 'Artifice of Absorption':

In my poems, I

frequently use opaque & nonabsorbable

elements, digressions &

interruptions, as part of a technological

arsenal to create a more powerful

("souped up")

absorption than possible with traditional,

& blander, absorptive techniques. This is a

precarious road because insofar

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as the poem seems

overtly self conscious, as opposed to internally

incantatory or psychically

actual, it may produce

self consciousness in the reader in such a way as to

destroy his or her absorption by theatricalizing

or conceptualizing the text, removing

it from the realm of an experience engendered

to that of a technique

exhibited.

Bernstein welcomes internalization. Without it, it is impossible for poetry to be experienced as an event in time. However, he does tend to view the semantic field as incorporating non-lexical features of a poem. While I agree with incorporation in principle, in practice it is psychologically problematical for most readers. This is perhaps why such poetry is deemed “difficult”.

It could be argued that visual poetry is, indeed, semantic. I agree to an extent. For instance, **Ernst Gomringer’s** ‘WIND’ (which plays with associations such as the words "in" and “win” contained within the word "WIND”) and **Augusto de Campos's** ‘CODIGO’ (which contains the word "God" as an anagram and alludes to "cogito ergo sum”) do, indeed, operate semantically. Nevertheless, their semantic operations are extremely meagre. With ‘WIND’ the associations come to only two words: “win” and “in” (perhaps also the word “wind”, as in to wind a clock). The same limitations can be seen in de Campos's ‘CODIGO’. Apart from a reader’s fleeting appreciation of the novel aspects of these poems their affects are exhausted no sooner than they are recognized.

In contrast, if we compare the following lines from ‘Into the Day’ by **J. H. Prynne** with ‘WIND’ and ‘CODIGO’ we can see their limitations more clearly:

Who does we reign our royal house

is roofed with fateful slates

These lines begin with the words ‘who does’ which immediately puts us into questioning mode, but the next word, ‘we’, draws our attention to the grammatical inappropriateness of the preceding word, ‘does’, in its location between ‘who’ and ‘we’. We have been led to expect a question but the grammatically incorrect syntax

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has frustrated this expectation. We are left instead with a language that rather than denoting a position of enquiry relies, instead, on connotation for this effect. This sort of “question” belongs to an "enquiry" that is syntactical rather than referential. In other words it is language pretending to be a question.

Similarly, ‘our royal house is roofed with fateful slates’ although syntactically correct contain the juxtaposition of ‘fateful’ with ‘slates’, two words not usually associated or combined with each other. This cannot be said of ‘roofed’ and ‘slate’ which often share the same juxtaposition. If the word ‘fateful’ had not been included there would be little room for plurality of meaning. The word ‘slates’ would mean solely roofing materials. It is the juxtaposition of ‘fateful’ and ‘slates’ that produces the plurality. A few of the dictionary definitions of the word ‘slate’ are: 1) a fine-grained rock that can be easily split into thin layers and is used as a roofing material. 2) a roofing tile of slate. 3) a writing tablet of slate. 4) a dark grey color. 5) a list of candidates in an election. ‘Slate’ is, thus, rich in connotation. The addition of ‘fateful’ enables any one of these meanings to become appropriate. For example, it is quite possible to have a fateful dark grey color—as in the sense of an omen. So, too, is it possible to have a fateful group of electoral candidates.

If we were to choose this latter image for one of the meanings of ‘fateful slates’ we could make it fit into the rest of the sentence (if it can rightly be called one) by opening up the meanings of ‘our royal house is roofed with’. This is fairly simple, as the idea of electoral candidates enables ‘royal house’ to connote a political arena of some sort as suggested by the word ‘house’ (The Houses of Parliament or The White House, for example). The word ‘roofed’ connotes a ‘covering-over’—a protection of some sort, as in the image of a bird’s wing covering and protecting its young. If we take this as our connotation, then one of the many meanings of ‘our royal house is roofed with fateful slates’ could be: ‘Our political system is protected from tyranny by its processes of electing political candidates who are under oath (fated) to guarantee this freedom from tyranny’. This interpretation of Prynne's 12 words is only possible with a richer semantic field of possibilities than both ‘WIND’ and ‘CODIGO’ provide.

The formal qualities of a poem are, of course, important but only indirectly: in that they facilitate the inner ear’s appreciation of the poem’s sonorous qualities. They do not contribute overmuch semantically. The only thing of importance is the mental activity experienced by the reader. The reader’s attention should not be focused on the poem’s structure or its rhetorical devices but, rather, should be concentrated on the resonance produced by the semantic qualities of the lexis. Only in this way, then, can the poem be fully experienced as mental activity. It must be remembered that a poem is primarily “heard” in the mind. All that we are able to glean from a poem is conveyed through the poem's semantic operations. To argue that the formal

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qualities of the text facilitate a more than limited semantic response is to rely too heavily on an aesthetic theory that is more appropriate to the visual arts.

Editor's Footnote: I was unable to format this piece so that Jeffrey's footnote numbers would appear in the piece. Their omission is my responsibility, not Jeffrey's.

L. M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p.12.

Rosenblatt, pp. 20-21.

Rosenblatt's attitude to the relevance of the text can be seen in the following quotation where she comments on the titles of literary works: 'But when we try to think of what a title—*Hamlet*, say, or *Moby Dick*—might refer to apart from a reader, whether the author himself or another, "the work" disappears. The title then refers simply to a set of black marks on ordered pages or to a set of sounds vibrating in the air, waiting for some reader or listener to interpret them as verbal symbols and, under their guidance, to make a work of art, the poem or novel or play'. See The Reader, the Text, the Poem, pp.12-13.

Charles Bernstein, *A Poetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.10.

Bernstein, *Content's Dream*, p.58.

Bernstein, Content's Dream, p.58.

Bernstein, Content's Dream, p.58.

Bernstein, Content's Dream, p.125.

Bernstein, Content's Dream, p.62.

Bernstein, A Poetics, pp.52-53.

email correspondence with Charles Bernstein dated June 26, 2005.

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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Mark Young (Rockhampton, Australia): from *Geographies*

from *GEOGRAPHIES*

TIERRA DEL FUEGO

The black hats draw on the
testimony of French combatants
in order to place the object in
a logical relationship to the rest
of the sentence. Mick Jagger
is no exception even though
he appears as an absent image—
all dharmas are ultimately empty
of any distinction that would
separate one dharma from
another. China looms large,
offering free audio pronunciation
of consumer-generated product
reviews. There are no rail-
ways. The beavers must die.

LOMBARDY

It was the spatial
frequencies at the
Fourier transform plane
& the presence of
defense attorneys
dressed in their best

Editor:
- Adam Fieled

Artist Posts

- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvani...
- From Poetry (2005)
- Leonard Cohen (Montreal, Quebec): from Beautiful L...
- Chris McCabe (London, UK): "Premeet"
- Chris McCabe (London, UK): from Progress Poems
- P.F.S.: Nine Paintings 2
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- Mary Walker Graham (Boston/Virginia, USA): "On the...
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suits that finally
brought him to belief
in the Big Bang theory
of the creation of the

universe.

THE TAKLAMAKAN DESERT

A fairly small
event in terms of
plate tectonics;
but the hard drive
ends up stripped
of all encrypted
data. Tabula rasa.

L'ARC DE TRIOMPHE

Storm surge, river-
boat casinos, the
biggest fertiliser plant
in the world, why
anyone would waste
over a pound of premo
in a giant joint are
some of the nettle-
some paradoxes of
democratic politics.

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Kelley White (New Hampshire, USA): Two Poems

ART OF THE AMERICAS

2008 March 2008 April 2008 May 2008 June 2008 July 2008 October 2008 November 2008 December 2008 February 2009 March 2009 April 2009 May 2009 December 2009 July 2016 November 2016 January 2017 February 2017 June 2017 April 2020 May 2020 July 2020 September 2020 October 2020 February 2021 March 2021 June 2021 July 2021 December 2022 June 2023 August 2023 September 2023 October 2023 November 2023 December 2023 January 2024 February 2024 March 2024 April 2024 May 2024 June 2024 July 2024 September 2024 October 2024 November 2024 December 2024 January 2025 February 2025 March 2025 April 2025 May 2025

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i.
unhook the latch
blow off dust
lay on the table beneath a single dangling bulb
spine flat
slick leaves open
always to the tight black-lined woodcut
man on man
manu a manu
knife
blade
empty chest
heart beating overhead

ii.
It is said that Crazy Horse ate Custer’s heart.
This is not true. Buffalo liver, perhaps.

iii.
pyramid
disinhearted
throw the rib-shell over the priest’s shoulder

iv.
abyss

v.
this thing
this flabby old muscle
stilled
red and growing darker
fat encrusted
drying to tallow
gristle
in each chamber
one smooth green stone
marbled
like my eyes

vi.

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ice arrest
watch
the saw cut
that grinding buzz
the dental whine

vii.
“hey babe,
I’ll give you water,
I already had
my wine”
(wants a dollar,
give him four bits)

viii.
you won’t answer
(the child had
no ear drum)

ix.
Henry carved a green stone heart
on a brass stand and marble base.
The children broke it.
No one confessed.
They were all punished.

x.
finger crook-and-pull
my own ribs
and still this hubbub

xi.
to become invisible
or rather:
the visible woman
clear plastic
head molded with Berry Crocker
hair
hips a little wide, perhaps
a babe in the womb

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no

xii.
ectopia coridis
child with the heart
outside the chest
cordae
cordate
card
iac arrest
press
chest
repressed

xiii.
I will be this small stone you might carry,
the brass paperweight that warms
to your touch,
your mother's, yours.
Replace my wound
with a stone.
Carry the stone.
Live stone
cold.

WHELK

in the city of sand
we build bone houses
we fear the wind
--it stings our eyes
with broken
monuments—

in the city of snow we shelter
in frozen breath—

in the salt city

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we live inside our wounds
--we wait for the tongue
of our heavy god—

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Jason Bredle (Chicago, USA): "The Night of the Jaguar"

THE NIGHT OF THE JAGUAR

Let's say this emerges centuries from now in some type of post-apocalyptic
Dumont Dunes hellscape,
people are either going to be blasting around
from membrane to membrane impressed with my forward thinking
or not blasting around from membrane to membrane
amazed by my total insanity
and I expect the latter
is what most people at this point expect me to say to someone
at my neighborhood Dominick's
because I don't do very well
with keeping this insanity thing on the down low
but it's not something most people expect me
to say to the pudding
at my neighborhood Dominick's
and the reason I think the latter is because come on,
if you're living in some type of post-apocalyptic Dumont Dunes hellscape
logic would dictate that earth has regressed
from where it is now
unless the educational divide has become so extreme
that the highly educated have wormholed their way
to more tolerable parallel membranes
and left this post-apocalyptic Dumont Dunes hellscape to those of us
who enjoy tearing into a good piece of meat with our hands
and pleading to our faithful squadron to
bring us the head
of Orpheus the Mighty
for the Night of the Jaguar is upon us
and blood will surely flow
red like the river Hades through this long ago forsaken hellscape

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in which case
descendents, I salute thee!
is something we've all thought about at some point
as we whipped through Dominick's on our way home from work at night,
but how many of us have outlined
everything we have in common with the jaguar
on the back of our grocery lists
in the hope that we might be revered
in the chance this future outcome happens?
Here's mine:
We are both solitary, stalk-and-ambush predators.
We are both opportunistic in prey selection.
We both bite directly through the skull of our prey.
We both enjoy swimming.
We both range from Paraguay to México.
We are both compact and well-muscled, with robust heads and powerful jaws.
We both reach sexual maturity at three to four years of age.
We both practice aggression avoidance behavior.
We are both the national animal of Guyana.
Of course it'd be ridiculous for me to want to be worshipped for this type
of forward thinking
but I think revered would be nice
but I don't know, in this scenario there's probably not
a lot of reading going on
but instead a lot of heat and blood and dunes
and filth and false idolatry
but the good news is if someone does read this,
I'm not going to seem totally insane
because the Night of the Jaguar is upon us, my brethren,
and blood is about to flow red like the river Hades, red like the river Hades
as you go forth and bring me the head of Orpheus the Mighty!

© Jason Bredle 2009

Jean Vengua (Monterey, California, USA): Three Prose Poems

#1
what do you think. half sleepy, once again on the other side of pain, ad nauseum,

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etc. she thinks about the angry blooms. how they emerge with such force, and with a little careful coaxing they give up black pollen. upended like that. turning volatile inside out, she can't figure it. wants to sew it up tight with a needle and thread; wants a beginning and an end. she has a body and expects it to tell tales. a tale of a prehensile tail. well what does it have to say for itself? from which joint or talon or lip or tongue issues word? half a word. half a moan, then, in exchange for some tender strokes.

#2
a blossoming non-pain along the elbow, even to the shoulder. pain of short shrift and some dribbles of light, and there among the curved rafters under the breasts. soft containment, the flesh thinning with age. sometimes turning the tongue on a word. nipples that are concise, small territories, templed; and these, once dark, that have paled and lost their boundaries. shift shift click. the knee dreams of fluffy pews. the back of the neck dreaming of ice. the tongue dreaming of ribs. stretch marks pay tributary to the navel, a locked door, both sides. where once there was a vortex of blood, there are a few paths narrowing to a stop.

#3
she feels old. can't understand she's beautiful, even naked, plastered in signs and executed like once-perfect britney. "nudity is not a crime." even when perfectly wet or close up, each hair is an aging fold, a suzanne, or a polly jean in the tub. the aesthetics speak imperfect and fleshy nouns. English wants to be precise. to be indirect is the best prescription. (sigh) i can't stand these colors. the colors of autumn are electric collars for your gender. this muscle is a girdle that contains all erotics; although your erotics are not my erotics, we may meet in the middle (joined at the navel, so to speak). look: language falls down around my ankles, so revealing.

© Jean Vengua 2009

Adam Fieled (editor, Logan Square, Philadelphia, USA): "Wittgenstein's Song"

Merely brilliant is no match

for being intimate. When you catch

a wave that breaks, you can only

half-determine its' course. Lonely

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is the determined man, whether

it’s he who decides his fate or fetters

the world lays on him. This

I learned from a young man’s kiss.

Thus, I’ve learned, said nothing.

To be silent is something

for the wise to practice. Words

go too far. How much have we heard

worth holding onto? How much said

that can placate what we dread?

© Adam Fieled 2005

Paul Siegell (Philly, Pa): Three Poems

ANSWER: A NEW ERA

the road otherworldly, “anyone else wanna see themselves
******on tv?”
the road otherworldly, crisis leadership and a discount on
******decisions when we’d really rather pay full price
the road otherworldly, sometimes everything in the salad
******tastes like produce grown on another planet

pick up a couple even tho they might be slightly troublesome

the road otherworldly, truckers who haul hazardous cargo
the road otherworldly, hurried the urine shot through urethra

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the road otherworldly, to be gradually gravitating toward
*******“Nothing. What’s new with you?”

from the rooftops we watch for the meteors of metaphor

the road otherworldly, Abraham, Alabama, iIn my tears for
*****America: today just needs to get on with it and let us
*********go already
the road otherworldly, poem Obama, Optimus Prime, Obama
******on Mount Olympus: (shepherd a breathtaking backfire?)
*all the hopes for Obama bohemia—
the road otherworldly, my coworker just sneezed

SCENE AT DUNG GATE

With prayers left in the crevices, tour-guided Americans lean against
stone, lick vanilla, speak of Wailing Wall and how incredible.

Bareback on a beast, a Palestinian boy plods up, shows off for the brand named,
whacks his donkey’s neck with a stick, quick, made from black irrigation tubing.

“—Whoa!” go the Americans.

Smirks. Goes around the corner.

Tzit tzit dangling, *yarmulke’d* yeshiva boys carry planks of wood
into the Old City for *Lag B’Omer* bonfires. Picnic festive and family full.

Little, they use the wall, masonry a few feet high, to slide the planks and rest.
Ice cream Americans smile, say *Shalom*, giggle with and get outta their way.

Returned, boy-with-burden meets boys-with-firewood and the Holy Land
comes out of camouflage.

Each in each other’s way. Language is used. Grips on the planks of wood
change, tighten, raise, as does the irrigation tube—

“—Yeladim!” detonates down from an apartment window above.
“—Yeladim! Yeladim!” a barrel chest yells. *Yeladim* means children.

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IT IS ITS SELF TO BE

out of an avid gale, a hurricane of shape-shifting persuasion, the line
“of being born a trumpet” *steers its sharps into the audience of dance*

moves & their domain names: am I not the notes being played as well?

no ordinary hit a-the old http://, such weight of wakeful conversation:
out of the clarion lift, in the calisthenics of the scenery, wide breaths

[esc] toward something

Joseph Bradshaw (Portland, Oregon): Two Poems

IN THE TERMINAL

“the Roman god of borders, Terminus taught us our limits but also showed us the unknown”
—**Kathleen Peterson**

In the terminal
shadows cast block
unyellowed light.

A room opens
to rooms, smaller
to larger, stucco

chipped, conceals
a swimming baby within
these walls, a

bird flown in through absent
chimney rustles
in the black that

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separation
of heard and known.
In the terminal, stepping

from the house
we have written we are
in the house, we cross it

out with a dash placed
between us as if
to connect, as if

a house was there—
here
the T stands alone, separates

He stands, alone.
In the terminal, I
see him walking as

if crossing a bridge, nothing
stands between to hold
past to will.

THE BALLAD OF WEDNESDAY, A SPIDER

for Spicer

Wednesday
windy, eddies
before Thanksgiving.

A spider crawling
out the door
receives goodbye

the same as I
8 legs Wednesday
four Friday. Less

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windy the sea-
shore in landlock
states: Shut the door

on a spider
Wednesday
the song goes:

Shut the door
or the words
we receive

a legless Goodbye
in this wedding
of Wednesday

a spider:
The saying of,
not the spoken of

Wednesday
Windy, eddies
before Thanksgiving

is hereby wedded
to a storm
a storm I said

The door is shut.
There isn't a door.
Shut the door.

By Sunday
we won't have any
need for that jar.

© Joseph Bradshaw 2009

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Lars Palm (Sweden): *pieces of lanzarote*

turned out it's
a bar where the cab
drivers go for a
beer or two between
fares

.....

(bosnia/lanzarote)

jajce, yaiza
both towns
pronounced
almost exactly
the same
way by
the locals at
hand

.....

(note on informal employment)

in arrecife, as in las palmas, as probably in santa cruz de tenerife, as possibly all over the archipelago (& maybe elsewhere in the world) some of the homeless serve as half-official parking guides/attendants. for which they get a couple of euro from the drivers using the service. they divide the streets between them, usually downtown side-streets, & work from seven or so in the morning until nine or ten at night. the only criteria are that you be reasonably sane & sober during working hours

.....

most flies in town maintain
a deeply intimate relation
ship with poeple's feet

is there a weather fore

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cast to be gained from
that? rain? of what?

or does it tell us more
about the flies & their
current fetish? now

seriously flies. in public?

.....

a house that
speaks. a beach
that moved. a
sun that plays
hide-&-seek, &
guitar

.....

pigeon
perched on
the back of

a chair waiting
to be
photographed

2

shutterbug
pigeon returning
to the chair

across the table
for another
photo

.....

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(another kind of playground)

& in the middle
of rambla medular
in downtown arrecife
there is a temporary out
doors gym

.....

(poema de arrecife)

this apparently abandoned
ancient black dog turning
grey takes up guard behind
my stool at the bus station
bar first sitting then laying
down just looking around
& occasionally up at me as
if i could take him out of here

.....

but who shall
tolerate who?

that is

who is in fact
superior to the other?

.....

(architecture)

would be easy building a house here. the basics are: white facade. no more than two
floors. doors & window frames may have other colours, although the darker
spectrum of greens seems to be the preferred one

.....

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a house
burning on
the hillside
in a little
village called
la asomada
leaving the
village
significantly
smaller

.....

then with
out warning
the torrent
came &
flushed
the streets
& as
it appears
the minds
of
some of
the people
& the
stray dogs
splash
with every
step they
take

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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Chris McCabe (Dagenham, Brixton, London, UK): Two Poems

THE MANNEQUINS

The Mannequins were premature,
their suits too big—
sport sacks, catnapped shoulders—
and so they shared time—
across wristwatches like grass—
grasshoppers in a milk-dish—
while cameras grazed red bricks—
swans at ease—
so the Mannequins took art careers—
ice-cream vans, carousels in funny mirrors,
began at a Gallery called
WELCOME TO THE CRYPT—
as before, they arrived early—
to read over their notes—
and drink enough coffee—

MAGPIES

GUINNESS is a kind of meat
a sustenance

that stains us
(with excess)

the Teddy slick
of oil & cream

Editor:
- Adam Fieled

Artist Posts

- Adam Fieled (Henniker, New Hampshire): from Beams:...
- More from No Tell Motel
- from No Tell Motel
- from Borrowed House
- Tammy Armstrong (Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canad...
- From X-Peri
- More from Equations (Thesis: Julie Hayes)
- More from The Argotist Online (poetry archive)
- From The Argotist Online
- From Eyewear

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- Adam Fieled

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in one magpie's tail—
it was not your heart,

you said,

that stirred beyond
the myth for this,

these—

killer-whale birds—

© Chris McCabe 2009

Aidan Thompson (New York, USA): from *Kind in Glass*

From: *Kind in Glass*

4.
The confidence of the photograph entices
narratives that linger on a line of pine trees and
the arrangement of poppies bordering a path.
Will taking a walk in your illusion help table my
uncertainty or cradle waking for good? Or
should I follow the eye dashing across the
valley, traveling the whole range of light and
shadow until it depletes itself of facts and
climbs over the hill? This won't prevent the
messenger from getting lost or dent the slope of
change tendriling the surface of chaos.
Nonetheless, I study the map as if having the
whole picture in one's hands will contain
getting older. Time can never be fully embraced
or understood but rambling farmland, deceived
by cold stretches of weather, produces
character-building endurance, assuaging attacks
of precipitation, settling you in the loam, which
helps in the end. The tailbone compresses when

2009 April 2009 May 2009 December 2009 July 2016 November 2016 January 2017 February 2017 June 2017 April 2020 May 2020 July 2020 September 2020 October 2020 February 2021 March 2021 June 2021 July 2021 December 2022 June 2023 August 2023 September 2023 October 2023 November 2023 December 2023 January 2024 February 2024 March 2024 April 2024 May 2024 June 2024 July 2024 September 2024 October 2024 November 2024 December 2024 January 2025 February 2025 March 2025 April 2025 May 2025 June 2025 July 2025

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plowing furrows, while cross-fertilization colors dreams and expands the range of creation, although yellow is brash and obdurate with its lemon taste and shrill of canary. I'd get up on an orange crate and beat my chest, but the truth of the matter is fruits have cleverly manipulated us into spreading their genes. Malevich's *Black Square and Red Square* has a way of representing pigment that both minimizes and amplifies, which is something like frogs never hopping exactly the same distance or the same way every time. We need the unpredictable or we wouldn't be able to create. Of course, I'd never kiss a toad no matter how princely. *Man with a Hat* with its dislocated eyes, ears, and lips is not rational or calculable, and the dawn—blaring bluebirds and crows, trumpeting irises and lilacs, offering their parts to bugs—has always been immeasurable. Deep down we're all concerned with leaving copies of ourselves.

5.

We considered reason to be a laser beam hacking away at doubt, but it turned out to be the mind chasing its tail, yoking intuition into sleep. Habit forms a relation between the worm and its word that is as thin as lips, but then, the wildness of an apple maturing on a tree, braced against temperature's ambiguity, is a hard act to follow, especially when there are unceasing variables circulating in the breeze. Routine challenges because words do what they want, and if we are alive, we will insist insistence is better than repetition, never using the same emphasis twice. Language is troublesome and sometimes etymology, grammar, and meaning struggle into a boat like shipwrecked mariners to save themselves from furious killer whales. Or is this a simple case of personification? "The dew is all over us," exclaimed the purple

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morning glory with a yellow smile. Words are little gloves for picking thoughts. She looks like a sunflower tracing the sun, yet how can one stand open mouthed considering the desert of life when Arkansas has the country's most dazzling waterfalls? Questions absorb heat, act as a motif repeating the familiar until someone says, "I looked into that at one time but found you could go too far." He needed a short humorous poem to fill the gap between truths because meaning, like God, is dead. "Nothing" makes itself felt in the flight between Arizona and Alabama, but traveling from ennui to anger made us aware of the subtleties in which life is actually lived. Finally we could relish in the sound of a key turning and the clip-clop of hooves galloping to the gate. Mules on narrow paths climb buttes stratified with russet and lavender. It is quiet, not even a swallow song, only stones humming with the sun on the edge of a horizon. Once mystery arrives, it has a negative capability to shine courage under rocks. Or was it their ability to sit on the brink that allowed them to feel a brush of a kiss in the dark?

6.
A table means steadiness, even though cascading fruit in the foreground teases my original perception, convincing logic to take a nap, or is this irony spinning in the corner? I fry eggs and cry over my shoulder because the cantankerous verb snorts and the all-sound music of the future bursts forth on buildings made of glass, taking America by form. Hang on to your waist and laugh because revisions shake and the equilateral triangle is stronger than the box. Paradox is one way of fighting the unpredictable. Then again, don't we have the world by a tale? I try to be a stylish person with

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coifed pink hair, while the rosy rose in my right hand droops with withered beauty. That's what we do—one generation showing the other that movement exists. Caught between the tilt of the head and the crossing of arms over the chest, I follow eyes following the arm following the chalk across the board. Certainly you see what is right. A guru holding a wineglass raises a pinkie in the air and students write this down. Carrying handfuls of liquid gives a knowing of nowness, while resting on one's laurels in the yard drops habit into a whole lot of nothing. Or am I over investing in vastness and doubt? I know the savagery of a tiger bursting into flames can destroy expectations, but how else can we contrast venal with vernal and the day to delight in? Rambling in forests leads one to the enjoyment of things as they come. It was a set of whispers that had Bilbo tooting his own horn in the fog, proving that the locus of meaning resides in off-stage commotion, interrupting the main action in the sun. I couldn't wrap my illusions around pinnacle-like plots, so I jumped into the sounding hole of his guitar, which had me do-si-doing on epiphany's hat. I jostle and overlap looking for the T-square and the architect's table, but stasis has no correspondence to satisfaction, even when we carry it out the door.

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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Cara Benson (New York, USA): from *perhaps the festivities are what they seem*

i wear a television set on my head. i tuck myself into the moving. holly leaves mingle with evergreen beside the flat. stop. everyone talking. and red sharps of fall bear the plaintive if only. telephone polls crucify the viewshed tilting toward the banks. clumps and tickles in the bog. what bridge will field the efforts to cross. i can hear you now. there is nowhere to look but gray. this will change. and change back. the morning is a summit to speechlessness. my squeaky voice can't manage its files and outrage simultaneously. might as well pose under the smokestack while reading a text of refusal. i'm dry as a torn kite and not much better than the paper it came on.

.....

like never to know which you specific you the universal royal deflecting-I you. hero you. glance over the shoulder mirror check. to whom it may or not. no ceiling fan in the forest but a bed of pine needles. floor rustles off trail cones dropping light rain breaking through what was that. turn to look hurry. but don't. won't can't. whose these or thous. or are. running along easily tripping as if polyvectorally untethered falling face first into the broken argument. houses the logs the unsubstantiated shelter. oh forgiven. i will tell you about a haunting. how the moon comes in and what was committed. there's no child now. out in the lake. donations have dried up & up. it's broadcast daily the snow behind the image.

© Cara Benson 2009

Kristen Orser (Chicago, USA): *(well enough for a mood)*

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Artist Posts

- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvani...
- From Poetry (2005)
- Leonard Cohen (Montreal, Quebec): from Beautiful L...
- Chris McCabe (London, UK): "Premeet"
- Chris McCabe (London, UK): from Progress Poems
- P.F.S.: Nine Paintings 2
- P.F.S.: Nine Paintings
- Mary Walker Graham (Boston/Virginia, USA): "On the...
- William Allegrezza (Indiana, USA): "distances"
- Barnaby Smith (New South Wales, Australia): "Dockl...

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(well enough for a mood)

Proof:

1. a light snow has fallen everywhere.
2. breathing is not difficult.
3. Thought is fern-like—

February (!) on a knoll is a standing lie. Is shaken
from center to circumference.

Much whispering and (bitter) fruit: Four stillborn—

(blue color in our spleen)

If I appear to be tiptoed, keep only my head:

A large neon red heart
on the side of a castle.

This is an image and also an identical question: *Will it rain?*

It's already heavy with autumn. Overseas, the polars are an artifice,
there are women who resemble violins and think, in orange color,
about how many times they wanted to have sex but didn't have sex.

When my blood is cold, I think about how I would look at someone
if I had paddled across the ocean to meet them.

(something to have suspicion of)

In the beginning of history, the longer necked women agreed to desire rain. But the myth of the self and, worse, the myth of the sleeping self, cut desire short.
Blue fire: Think a woman's face
Likely daybreak: Bones
Winter : As a symmetrical vocabulary
The frightened sky eats the heads off men—All women become left handed. In this possible moment, the alphabet and the volcano cannot disguise the new

question—*What is in the distance?*

2008 March 2008 April 2008 May 2008 June 2008 July 2008 October 2008 November 2008 December 2008 February 2009 March 2009 April 2009 May 2009 December 2009 July 2016 November 2016 January 2017 February 2017 June 2017 April 2020 May 2020 July 2020 September 2020 October 2020 February 2021 March 2021 June 2021 July 2021 December 2022 June 2023 August 2023 September 2023 October 2023 November 2023 December 2023 January 2024 February 2024 March 2024 April 2024 May 2024 June 2024 July 2024 September 2024 October 2024 November 2024 December 2024 January 2025 February 2025 March 2025 April 2025 May 2025

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(wish. often slow)

Sudden impulse is surprise, is—

A seizure brings considerable stillness,
never the romantic fireworks or skin
turning to stone.

In the distance— You! I am accumulating
as the sky loops and arrives

at the time when the daisy slicer has an asthma attack and the child grows a useless wing. I skip a period. I consider changing into a tree, some kind of revolt against the guilt of a double, the many times I've called someone mine.

(to tend arrival)

My not-period is not subjective—The whole day is east, waiting for a detailed subject taking the shape of a fetus. The root, according to the seed, chooses the hour of everyone waking up as the hour to dream a question:

Me is only a disguise?

(I disguise you for me and hold, disappear—)

In the practice of ripening, I pull out my eyes (gradually with me—gradually, gradually) and show you the third and innermost layer of tissue.

(No, I haven't bled this month and yesterday was parallel,
but we acted for tomorrow. For—The space between our
two coasts, traced by our circling toes in the air, is the space
we seek to obtain.)

(finishing foot)

If atmosphere carries,
the layer of the flower will keep our malignant heads in motion:

It's the lower part of me that thinks it's a boy,
but I am a pear. I consider a similar question:

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What (who?) is the pursuant?

The lost swan forgets its own body and withdraws into soft porcelain. It isn't until spring when someone arrives to disappoint the sitting lily. To ask a dense question about infinity.

© Kristen Orser 2009

Naomi Buck Palagi (Indiana, USA): Four Poems

WE ALL FALL DOWN

Midnight, Mississippi

hwy 49 going south
or north sets a ole house
is / was

walls fell down
one by one or all at once but
the roof
took off somewheres

just a platform a things
easy overstuffed maroon chair ridiculous
skinny bed in the corner an dull
bench
pull cattycorner to the ole upright
ole piano

beyond it you see the sky
like you do in the delta

road curves gentle there
and not but a single tree

never did see it in the moonlight

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FLIGHT

bound
and determined to travel
bound her tresses, her breasts
bound to marry
bound books
bound, like a yellow hound, to her lover great leaps
and bounds such progress
was bound to change her

bound by oath, by ropes, by duty
with love
unbind
his feet
which have fallen to her she is bound
to do what she can goodwill abounds it

binds her

to this earth this rope this meaty
universe on a string
she is bound and determined
to

travel

ODE TO OH TINA

okay, to start with, we don't need
another hero. we don't need to know the way
home. all we want, all we want…
her arms
her skin
that dress all we want is tina, oh that passion
voice of husky love and grit did i mention
we don't need all we want is

rain

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on the window pane

i’m private
look at the muscle baring her arms, her teeth all we need
all we want
that hero
private home dancing
on the window
pain

how can we
thunder
thunder dome and window pane
tell me do you remember all that
grit and salt the way home slit into dress

bare teeth bared arms and all all we want is
open

and thundered

TANTRUM WORDS AIN’T NUTHIN

`at las’ silver roof tantrum she thowed ain’t nuthin
ain’t nuthin but nuthin
break `at vacant holler a hers
smother damn pilla’ break `at holler
she a tantrum i ain’ aimin a fix
damn roof ain’t broke ain’t nuthin i ain’t aimin at
ain’t nuthin but nuthin

silver voice holler til she fixed she ain’t aimin a vacate
she a vagrant but ain’t nuthin silver

done tole her tantrum ain’t nuthin
ain’t no roof o’ her head ain’t no atlas tell her future ain’t no silver
for sale just a pilla settin in `at vacant head

break it, baby, holler `at tantrum go stuff `at extry pilla
best `at roof be vacant next time she fixin a holler

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best `at atlas be ready an silver

tantrum ain’t nuthin but a roof ready a break

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Emily Pettit (Northampton, Massachusettes, USA): Two Poems

HOW TO START A FIRE WITHOUT STICKS

Get up. Get up and pretend your head isn't full
of tiny broken sticks. It will be worth it to walk
through the door such a complicated mess,
crazy to such purpose. One way to torture a person
who is sleep deprived is to pretend the house is on
fire. Look very serious and say *Fire! Fire! Fire!*
Look very serious and say *Water! Water! Water!*
Look very serious and say *You built a better body
of water*. Yes you did. Where did you find such a
stunning embankment? Pretend you put out the fire
with the better body of water. Pretend you are
a medium to large marine mammal. I will be
a fly on the wall dressed as a person, a person who
has complicated ideas about what constitutes a wall.
No doubt I'm a little faded, dejected, incognito,
noncommittal. I only do practical things.

A BOOT AND A SCORPION

I can't imagine what you must think of me.
Or perhaps I can. Perhaps as a pomegranate.
Or as a sparrow, but a kind that cannot fly.
A fog that is made up. A crest or ridge.
For example, the border of a bone.
To be still to come. A boot and a scorpion,
they meet in the shower. An outline
of the number eight, formed with two loops
and one continuous line. Yesterday's noon

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we all forgot. Collapsing into surf
when close to shore or hitting rocks.
I'm awake, I think. Maybe as a bookend.
I've thought about you in many ways
neither grammatical or while wearing gloves.

© Emily Pettit 2009

Andrew Lundwall (Wisconsin, USA): Three Poems

BAUBLES

footsteps the color of spur in dawn arcades
a technology of hush a nothing to look for
drinkable crests of twilight manes of dagger
stuttering turrets sloshing a mile-high snow
the dots each crane would hoist and ripple
or thrusts resilient bouquet of yellow smoke
threatened eyelids videotape stripping lots
or thinking drink and her transparent brooch
a mutable connection derailed by sideways sighs
lets so much in a little an oblivion of trinkets

IMPULSIVE POEM

a net out ahead two-a-piece wheezing
adderall funspokes belabored & bedraggled
a mystical head given a mystery occasion
of cardboard wingtips paint by numbers
plant anything that each breath should
hinge on kleptomania but it's given
murmurs of missing a tremulous kleenex
leopard print multi-faceted eyelids
drag dregs of cigarette up & away
it's an all-time rumour a gospel
duped bellydeep & good as thick

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SHEER CHERRY

look no hands a buzz a silo what's collapsing
tunnels of fun ferns are set are swell & pines
throb elusive traipsing pillows of cloud elongated
melodious if she had a pin yet everywhere there's
a password stoned honey being called alive under
hunched shoulders of blue is sheer cherry conjuring

© Andrew Lundwall 2009

Eileen Tabios (California, USA): Two *Synopsis* Poems

SYNOPSIS #1

There are keys to everything, even handcuffs. Why remember Catullus for his scurrilous invective? I am at my loneliest, the postcard says, when I see a mirror and you are not raising a hand to wipe away my tears. I recall the rain in Burgundy, its warmth washing the slate path towards Anne Gros' winery. His first love unexpectedly sits at the next table and, after ten years, both smile without rancor. The t-shirt pronounces its wearer to be a VIRGIN! (but that's become such a 20th century sentiment). He disappears into a gnat at the rim of my vision as I wonder whether sweat can be dishonest. Otherwise, falling would not hurt? Right under your nose, a trip wire leers as it hides in the shimmer of heat. "Billy is deaf," I oil her hackles. What is an artist without a desecrated battleground? I was cruel to a young lady from the barrio, labeling her "Maid." She folds into sadness—that he would not think to consider her in another way. The bottle became empty, and another day gave way. The fire erupted like a poem. She is a redhead but dandruff remains white. As he strides down the path, stones clatter from his tread. Under his left eye, he has a scar that people never see but recall in memory. Once, a famous painter whispered, "When you see the glass, you do not see its transparency."

SYNOPSIS #2

My gift of chocolate in pink cellophane failed to make the blonde smile. The rain in Spain flattens against my windowpane. I consider the bill in front of me: its unfamiliarity. The passer-by wears a hat crocheted from pink lace and white string.

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The bus drives by with a side panel advising, *be once, be always, just be*. He disappears into a gnat at the rim of my vision as I wonder whether sweat can be dishonest. She might as well plant fragile shoots in watery paddies under a glaring sun. Right under your nose a trip wire leers as it hides in the shimmer of heat. Your intellect is a scratchy wool coat, I think as I consider the tunnel's capped teeth. No matter how often California regurgitates into the sea, they continue to build houses on top of faultlines, even when they contain nurseries with pastel wallpaper. I remember cool breezes coiling their milky skeins around pine tress. He is relieved at her smile. The afternoon sliced his face delicately with the edge of a half-opened curtain that allowed the sun to pass. I tasted lemon and butter in the wine. The wind blows and the poem-in-progress flies away: His tan jodhpurs are encased in black riding boots. When she will be excavated in a hundred years, her bones will have outlined a fetal position. I sense a city bleeding beyond the window: feel Manila's infamously red sunset.

The "Synopsis" poems are from a series DECADE which remixes lines from a series LIFE SENTENCES whose poems were written over a decade ago. LIFE SENTENCES was the author's first prose poetry work.

© Eileen Tabios 2009

Rufo Quintavalle (France): Three Poems

LETTER FROM ICELAND

I. EARTHQUAKE

Peace, the sun, a whimbrel on the grass
and under this the thing that nags
and shakes the house, and makes you write:
Peace, the sun, a whimbrel.

II. HOT TUB

I'm sitting in the hot tub in the rain and the rain
is coming down sideways
so my chest and face are getting cold
while my fundament heats from underneath
like

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one
of
those
long
thin
things
in
deep
sea
vents
that mine a difference in heat for life;
it seems that that there is and not that there is not
is down, in no small part, to them
so I open a beer and sit in the hot tub in the rain.

III. KELDUR

I don’t understand anything: why I came into
this body, this life;
my wife says I think too much,
that I have too much free time,
but I wouldn’t want less, and besides,
I’d hardly call it free.
Up the road there is what was a house
and now is a building on a farm;
before the house there was nothing,
and around the farm there is nothing still.

IV. THE MONKS

Like sperm come too late to an egg the monks
arrived in their coracles, wriggled, prayed
on the coast a while, then passed; they left no trace.

V. SANCTITY

You put out to sea and nine times in ten
it’s suicide; otherwise sanctity.

FREI WERDEN IST DER HIMMEL

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The days are staying hot into the night
and the drag queens are fighting in the corner bar;
some flagrantly so or choose flagrantly
to work their way out of it
but hasn't everyone on this street been born
into a life not their own?
It's nothing to be ashamed of, Jesus
was and took thirty years to wriggle out of his;
what is is if you never do
or never make peace with the lie.
At five o'clock the rubbish truck comes,
on Thursdays the dustman sweeps the street.
The city, which endlessly starts again,
belongs to the drag queens in the corner bar.

MOSES AND AARON

Walking back with a loping gait
from the prize-winning head-cheese shop
the afternoon spoke to me
like God in the bush did to Moses;
thing was whereas Moses understood
so well he couldn’t explain what he heard
I was garrulous, kind of morning
after chirpy but hadn’t a clue
what the day was saying.
Or rather the clues were everywhere:
the houses said *build* but the clouds
festinalenting across the sun *melt*,
and while a woman’s calves, that thickened
like fish do then disappeared whispered *follow*,
the gravid pellets forming in my gut
since lunch said *home, James, fuck the horses*.
The afternoon, a Wednesday, was colder
than it should have been; what’s a man to do?

You talk and talk
but there is so much
in the way

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of words
these days
it might make
more sense
to say
less.

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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Kent Johnson (Freeport, Illinois, USA): Two Poems

BAGHDAD

Oh, little crown of iron forged to likeness of imam's face,
what are you doing in this circle of flaming inspectors and bakers?

And little burnt dinner all set to be eaten
(and crispy girl all dressed with scarf for school),
what are you doing near this shovel for dung-digging,
hissing like ice-cubes in ruins of little museum?

And little shell of bank on which flakes of assets fall,
can't I still withdraw my bonds for baby?

Good night moon.
Good night socks and good night cuckoo clocks.

Good night little bedpans and a trough where once there was an inn
(urn of dashed pride),
what are you doing beside little wheelbarrow
beside some fried chickens?

And you, ridiculous wheels spinning on mailman's truck,
truck with ashes of letter from crispy girl all dressed with scarf for school,
why do you seem like American experimental poets going nowhere
on little exercise bikes?

Good night barbells and ballet dancer's shoes
under plastered ceilings of Saddam Music Hall.

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- Adam Fieled

Artist Posts

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Good night bladder of Helen Vendler and a jar from Tennessee.
(though what are these doing here in Baghdad?)

Good night blackened ibis and some keys.
Good night, good night.

(And little mosque popped open like a can, which same as factory of flypaper has blown outward, covering the shape of man with it (with mosque): He stumbles up Martyr's Promenade. *What does it matter who is speaking*, he murmurs and mutters, head a little bit on fire.
Good night to you too.)

Good night moon.
Good night poor people who shall inherit the moon.

Good night first editions of *Das Kapital*, *Novum Organum*,
The Symbolic Affinities between Poetry Blogs and Oil Wells,
and the *Koran*.

Good night nobody.

Good night Mr. Kent, for now you must
soon wake up and rub your eyes and know that you are dead.

from *Homage to the Last Avant-Garde*, (Shearsman, UK)

[GAZA] EXCEEDS ITS OBJECT

"I want to be in the class of people who did…the thing that met the aesthetic of the moment."
Douglas Feith, Under-Secretary of Defense, as quoted in the New Yorker

Come off it, Tha'lab, you faker, you *kadhib*,
yes, very funny, but for goodness sake,
just put back those purple bowels in your tummy—
you'll be late for work!

Make haste, Safia, you little scamp, you pig-tailed *qasida*,
put that fat flap of scalp back on your crown—

2009 April 2009 May 2009 December 2009 July 2016 November 2016 January 2017 February 2017 June 2017 April 2020 May 2020 July 2020 September 2020 October 2020 February 2021 March 2021 June 2021 July 2021 December 2022 June 2023 August 2023 September 2023 October 2023 November 2023 December 2023 January 2024 February 2024 March 2024 April 2024 May 2024 June 2024 July 2024 September 2024 October 2024 November 2024 December 2024 January 2025 February 2025 March 2025 April 2025 May 2025 June 2025 July 2025

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now's not the hour for teenage pranks,
it's time to go to school!

Ah, quit moaning Miss Al-Sayab, you *muwashshara*,
we know that fetus hanging from your bottom is a rubber trick—
we're not stupid, you know, so cease being crass,
and get ye to market!

Cut the crap, Nizar, you *iltizam*,
pick that torso up and put it back on your dancing spine—
we know that old box and mirror trick,
now get thee to prayers!

Hey, Rashid, you *al-nahda*,
we know you love the special effects of Hollywood movies,
but it's not safe to make yourself into a geyser of fire—
and anyway, you're supposed to be accompanying the inspectors!

Say there, little Samih, you *shirnur*,
six-month-olds aren't supposed to be able to fly—
so get down from those power lines and gather
your legs and head on the ground here, you naughty child!

Listen, Tawfiq, you *tafila*,
OK, so you're a sorry-assed academic with a Ba'ath mustache,
but put your brains back into your head, you can't fool us by calling in sick—
it's time for class and your students are ablaze!

Yo bro, my main man Bashad, you *tradiyyat*,
you're as if dead and white as marble, but there's not a scratch on your body—
quit fucking around, the mosque is rubble,
make the siren light flash and spin on your ambulance!

Greetings Ahmad, you *badi-kamriyyat*,
put your face back and also that water pipe hose thing back into your belly—
yeah, boo hoo, so your kid died of dysentery…
Suck it up! The price is worth it!
Now pick up that basket of sweet fruits and gum!

Good morning, Mrs. al-Jurjani, you *madin*,

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author of four essays on postmodern currents in American poetry,
what are you howling and wailing like that for, hitting your skull
against the flagstones like a mechanical hammer?
A horse is a horse, and if a horse is dead, a horse is dead—
more so, you are naked, which is unbecoming of a lady your age and standing.
Like Hamlet, your emotion is unconvincing, for it exceeds its object.
Therefore, we beseech thee: Show some gratitude, and put a plug in it.

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Daniel Borzutzky (Chicago, USA): Two Poems

ONE SIZE FITS ALL

See that immigrant freezing beneath the bridge: he needs a blanket.

See that Torah scroll from the 16th century: it sprawls on the floor like a deadbeat;
the Jews need to wrap it in a *schmatte*.

The problem, you see, is “exposure.”

The poet forgot to shake off his penis and pee dripped on the manuscript that he
submitted to the 2007 University of Iowa Poetry Prize.

The literary scholar took off his tie and lectured the class on the post-humanoid
implications of the virtual cocktail.

He put a pistol on his desk and told the students he was going to kill himself if they
didn’t do their homework.

Everything in his “worldview” was exposed.

The data-entry specialist imagined new forms for the senior administrator who was
only a temporary carcass, an anti-poem: a budding literary movement that
communed with master works by committing suicide while reading them.

The temporary carcass of the bureaucrat, dry as Vietnamese Jerky, called out for
“gravy” as it “peppered” the eloquent field of syntax.

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Abrupt exposure to ordinary language may result in seriously compromised intelligence, implied the carcass as he lipped the trembling lily which hid the police officer, who said: *if you look at me one more time I'm going to zap you with my Taser gun*.

Abrupt exposure to gateway bureaucracy may result in apocalyptic equivocation, implied the carcass as he dreamed of nomadic man-eaters with a language all their own.

I liked the former "Language Poet" for the speech act he attached to the back of my book, which reminded me of Charles Olson on human growth hormones.

The problem, said the critic, remains one of imagination and its insistence on the distinction between thought and action.

"I let him touch my wooden leg," she said, "and when I unscrewed it I was stuck legless in the hay."

Which is to say that the detachable penis is was and has always been compatible with family values.

"He was a seriously hardworking boy with a fetish for glass eyes and wooden legs," she said, "and I really really loved him."

The poetry era reached its nadir as the housing market plummeted, said the professor, as he repeated for the umpteenth time the anecdote about the boy who met an underwater woman as old as the hills.

"Does Poetry live here," he asked. "Poetry lives here," she replied, "but he will chop you up and kill you, and then he'll cook you and eat you."

My ideal reader has neither a name, a body, nor an online profile.

Which is not to say that I am not concerned with customer satisfaction.

Dear Reader, Because we value your input, please take a moment of your busy time to answer the following question, which will greatly assist us in our mission to produce cultural artifacts that will further meet your aesthetic and spiritual needs.

Which of these statements most accurately reflect your feelings about the writing

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you have just read:

a) This is a splendid poem, distinguished by the clarity of its thought, the force of its argument, and the eloquence of its expression.

b) This poem is conceptually vapid, artistically shallow, and contributes nothing to the world of letters. It is little more than a collection of bad sentences and poorly formed ideas.

c) I like this poem, but I wouldn't spend money to read more poems like it.

d) When I read this poem, I feel frustrated and annoyed.

e) When I read this poem, I feel nothing.

BUDGET CUTS PREVENT ME FROM WRITING POETRY

You say I wish to create a universe that is an insane asylum

But I am only one American and the planets are all on Quaaludes

And the baby is in the bassinet and the eggs are in their baskets

And the semen are in their testicles and Hamlet is a faceless robot who is president of the rotary

And the myth where I am dying from abuse of language

Is ascending and descending at the same time

I'd tear myself to shreds to prevent you from calling me a poet

Or even an anti-poet for I am the apropos of nothing

And I am the check this box for all of the above

And I am a smudged-out image of Joan of Arc praying in a toxic rainstorm

And I am in myself more than I know myself

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And me and I are the ideal couple

And as we seduce each other we think of Kim Jong-Il making love to a Swedish prostitute in a barbed-wire cage

And we think of vital organs for sale on eBay

And we refuse to Google ourselves because we do not want to know what the world thinks of the binary system we have become

And we think of monads and visual simulacra

And Daffy Duck is a gigantic tarantula crawling through the famished roads of ambiguity, where a bearded man with bulging pockets asks if I'm a poet

I vomit a poem onto a stack of bloody cows and win a Pushcart Prize

And for a split second nothing stays the same until we flail into the simile of history.

© Daniel Borzutzky 2009

Gabriel Gudding (Normal, Illinois, USA) and Adam Fieled (Editor, Logan Square, Philly, USA): *Waxing Hot poetics dialogue*

AF: You write, in *Rhode Island Notebook*, that "most literature is delusional, pretty, petty, and false." It seems like the composition of *R.I.N.* might have been a concerted, specific attempt to write something realistic, gritty, pertinent and true. Something, in other words, that transcends the artificiality of most literature. Is there a grain of truth to this?

GG: Maybe. Most poetry is a kind of verbal costume. An ideational schmaltz. An emotional uniform. A mental getup. This is just as true for avant garde and post-avant work as it is for mainstream stuff. Though I don't think the costumed life or the costumed mind is peculiar to poetry, necessarily, as a genre, it's no secret poetry tends more toward stylization than other modes. Poetry is the country music of literature. Given to schmaltz, nostalgia, over extension, socio-emotional reactivity, and alienation from material reality. The flipside is the hipster reaction to this: flaff,

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whathaveyou, langpo, N/Oulipian generativity (hipster maximalist masculinist compulsive text generation), irony as a modal approximation of self-awareness, and a conflation of experiment in form with soi-disant radical politics (the result being merely a more extravagant quietism). Our capacity for delusion is almost total.

AF: OK. I'm curious to what extent these kind of thoughts might have directed the composition of R.I.N. You include heaping gobs of concrete particulars: times, distances, amounts of gas, temperatures, highway and town names. Do you feel that these details "naturalize" the book somehow, give it stable/solid/palpably non-delusional roots?

GG: Good question. Not sure if they're less delusional but I can say they are less stylized. Maybe they do something not often done in poetry. These are the local details of your average person's world, least ways of my world. I wanted to include that stuff. Just the attempt to write the in-between, overlooked, peripheral— as a part of the greater truths, larger narratives, and more overt emotionality of most poetry. Not sure if these elements naturalize the book, but my hope is the sum total makes for a book that does not much move via typical poetry modalities. There is that huge long section around page 90 or so where I wrote down ALL the signs I saw from Ohio through Indiana and into Illinois. Horrifying. We *READ* all that stuff: it affects us. It moves us. It makes us. We need to become aware of that. I feel it needs to be in our literature. It is an important part of our disgusting history. I really do conceive of the book as a history. My daughter Clio was named for the muse of history. The book is dedicated to her.

AF: It is interesting that you allude to history, because the book not only documents itself via concrete, particular travel details, but via an engagement with the history of poetry. I think one of the most interesting aspects of this are the pastiche-poems included, which take on **Gerard Manley Hopkins**. It seems like you were taking Hopkins' purity and religiosity and "humorizing" them, not in a malicious or sardonic way, but playfully and tenderly. How do you think that, in the context of RIN, poetry history intersects with "our disgusting history"? In other words, you deal, in RIN, with several different kinds of history. I take "our disgusting history" as a reference to the ugliness of American highways: of roads, paved surfaces, road-signs. Your engagement with Hopkins is a nod to a different kind of history, a cultural one. Your book then becomes a kind of textual site where different histories intersect. What would you imagine to be the cumulative effect of these colliding histories? How did you envision these histories coming together, both for yourself as you were writing and for the reader? Was there an intended cumulative effect, something you were trying to show and/or demonstrate?

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GG: There was a hoped for cumulative effect. But much was arrived at, discovered, in the writing. And the book became in one sense oppositional to the idea that the imagination is a refuge. We are told by poets for the last two hundred twenty years there is some kind of glorious refuge in imagination, imagination is this transcendent, palliative kingdom: the safety and order in the supreme fiction, the imagination as oasis, a good poem as a **Wallace Stevens**' Memorial vacation get-away, and that this capacity of fantasy is some kind of "palace of wisdom." This is complete bunk. Absolute delusion. It's the intellectual equivalent of tourism: the knowing, willful engagement in the delusive economy of deflected escape. It makes sense that Stevens constitutes the pinnacle of this romantic ideal — as his poetics is strongly related to the rise of modern tourism. Where Stevens thought he was speaking of the nature of mind and imagination and its relation to reality, he was in fact writing deeply classicist and racist poetry. This book stakes an oppositional poetics to **Stevens, Ginsberg, Spicer, Ashbery**, siding with **Loy, Lola Ridge, Rakosi, Niedecker**. I wanted to write the kitsch, the radio, the a-magical, the quotidia of civic life, the road sign — things normally kept from poetry — as a means of reminding myself how much stuff we IGNORE in order to pretend to touch the real or the supreme - or “the mind,” as if the mind were this Ashberian numinous burning collagic machine of lyricism.

AF: This question, of what is real, and may be realistically portrayed in literature, can lead in many different directions. What I'm curious about is how it ties in for you with the idea of privilege. In lots of schmaltzy poetry, we see a privileged, patriarchal figure having some kind of epiphany. However, in fighting against this attitude, willfully structuring your poem so that ephemeral elements (road-signs, McDonald's, radio) take a prominent position, can it be argued that you are enacting a different form of the same privileged status? That is, do you find yourself to be in the position of telling the reader "what's really real"? Was an effort made to efface or subsume the (male) ego and its drive to direct, control, dominate?

GG: It’s a fair question. Sure, that could be argued. Anything can be argued. But the book is not a case for the real, the true; it’s not even, to my mind, a comment on “the poetic.” What it is, for me, in its largest dimension, is the story of a family falling apart and a nation going insane. Those are mysteries. Ridiculously huge and never-ending conundra. I don’t know how a nation goes insane. And though I know how a family falls apart, the WAY that is does so is a deep, terrifying mystery. At an ethical level, though, it’s a book about suffering and how to endure it - and in fact how to flourish in it. At an aesthetic level, it is textured by what **Bakhtin** calls "primary speech genres" (road signs, radio utterances, bumper stickers, the makeshift reality of internal mental dialogue, embarrassing first draft crap), the book is perforce built on speech realities that fall outside what Bakhtin calls official

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speech. It is overtly badly stylized (poorly realized) speech. But nowhere does it touch on the nature of the real. It's just proffering the other things often left out of a book, a history, a politics, an organized "life": buildings the size of dust motes, blurry towns smeared into a chain of ramps and roadside islands. It says nothing about the way these things exist, just that they might. The towns we see from the road might exist. The people in the Hardees might exist. The rest stops might exist. The jerk in the adjacent car might. Your hands on the steering wheel might too. A way out of my sorrow might exist. A way out of literature might exist.

But at bottom the book (for me) is about the navigation of sorrow: how to anchor instead of grasp; how to sail instead of let go. I have no idea what it is for someone else. For my daughter Clio, I had hoped it would be a history, a partial history of what was happening to her family during a time of great sorrow.

AF: Partly I think it's the affectivity of the book which makes it so compelling. Without easing into sentimentality, it tells a real, heart-rending story in a narrative that's not always strictly linear, but that is traceable. However, the trend in the academy now is all towards New Historicism: tying literature in to larger historical patterns that dictate the behavior and production habits of authors, albeit sometimes unconsciously, or subconsciously. If, where this book is concerned, you had to New Historicize yourself, how would you do it? Can you tie the affectivity of a "time of great sorrow" into a prevalent, comprehensible Zeitgeist?

GG: First, thank you for seeing the affective nature of it in that light. It's heartening to know you've read it so well. Second, I see New Historicism as a literary *reception* movement coming to vogue in the late '80s and rising out of inter- and intra-disciplinary concerns about how to read (and write critically about) literature. I do not see it as a movement much affecting *production* concerns. So, the book is a history — which is not to say it was affected particularly by current trends in literary historiography.

But I see more what you're asking now — and I wouldn't call what you're asking me to do particularly "new historicism." Seeing the connections between "personal troubles" and "public issues" is precisely what **C. Wright Mills**, the great renegade sociologist, calls having a useful "sociological imagination." It's just good sociology. The book's appositions of national narratives and personal ones implicitly make this connection — sometimes uncannily. For instance, the day the driver's family decides on "divorce" is the day the US begins the invasion of Iraq. It's a coincidence, yes, but it's clear that the larger socio-emotional climate affects a family's weather. What a horrifying time in our history.

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AF: Dovetailing with this, I'd like to bring up the larger issue of historicity, as it applies to your (and all of our) endeavors. How important do you think it is for poets in our day and age to develop, hone, and maintain a historical sense, both as regards their own reading and their literary production? To state this more clearly: is it worthwhile to regard ourselves as players in a potentially historical drama, or do you believe it more productive to (I'm paraphrasing **Joyce**) awake from the nightmare of history?

GG: I guess my answer depends on what you mean by "historical sense." I have a few friends, as well as a few former friends, who believe, despite their obscurity and in some cases because of their fame, that they are writing for the ages, who think history will exonerate them or uphold them, who feel their current lack of recognition will eventually be transmuted by play of decades into a trans-temporal audience or who feel their present recognition is logical and was inevitable. That's delusional. But both constitute a common pose, a frequent tactic, and a conventional gambit — the former especially I'd guess commonly seen among non-bourgeois writers. **Bourdieu** addresses this well in *The Field of Cultural Production*. It's either delusion, on the one hand, or an expedient of aesthetic politics, on the other.

But if you mean is it a good idea to just try to have a relatively global sense of what's been written and why it's been written, then yes I think that's wise.

AF: Can you parlay your "global sense" into a précis of where you think poetry is going in 2008? Is "post-avant," in all its amorphousness, a viable entity and a worthy successor to L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, or do you feel there are other currents currently existent that could lead experimental (or even mainstream) poetry down new, unexplored vistas?

GG: It's an interesting question. But I wonder about its intent. You seem to be suggesting that having a "global sense" about what's been written and what's being written necessarily implies having a market sense about what's the Next Hip Thing. Maybe I'm putting words in your mouth. Likely I have. In any case I feel that trying to know or trying to control the direction of the field is part of what Bourdieu calls the production of a collective misrecognition— a belief in "literature." This manufactured "cusp" or fore-guard is the site upon which the struggle for the monopoly of symbolic power concentrates. It's not a matter of direction (where the field is going); it's a matter of the illusion of direction created by continual literary rebranding (done in interviews, blog posts, anthologies, reviews, manifestoes, movements, etc).

I mean, basically there have been over the past 150 years a limited range of techniques that just keep getting relabeled and rebranded: collage becomes "cut up"

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becomes "flarf" or "flirph" or whatever it's called now; disjunctive anacoluthon becomes what **William James** called "automatic writing" and **Stein** takes that into cubist dada which is then rebranded via a different set of theoretical apparatuses (Frankfurt School) as L=A=N....; a hodgepodge of sleep-based techniques and collaborative aleatoric methods morph (thank goodness) with oppositional leftist politics into surrealism which then meld with the rightist political quietism of late modernism into deep image and ...?

This is a market. Markets need a predictive mindset. If "art" and "writing" cannot divest itself of this fascination with symbolic exchange-value in favor of a use-value, it will continue to be just another inverted extension of the economic system.

Too, markets need a projected null point that serves to mask the manufacture of collective misrecognition: the new; imagination; the originary; celebrity and celebration.

Is it possible to write and to think about writing in ways that do not create and maintain hierarchies of artistic domination and power? Is it possible to write without belief in a universe of celebrants and believers? Is it okay to write without thinking oneself a potential

object of celebration? And after having written, is it possible not to vie for status as a consecrated writer or as a writer who displays his own performative disinterest in the field of production?

AF: You seem to be commenting, with a somewhat negative slant, on the phenomenon of literature as a market-place, a zone of commodities, advertisements, and perpetuated illusions. You have also pointed out a kind of fallacious veneer to the rationale of your friends and ex-friends that shun the spotlight, but dare to believe that their work might have lasting value. Do you see a contradiction here? In other words, if the literary market-place is not a desirable locale, and if obscurity is also not a desirable locale, is there a happy medium or a third realm that you find preferable, or that could balance the two?

GG: Adam, not to be obtuse, but I'm not sure what you mean by "viable." Or even what is meant by "post avant." The imaginary gestalt **Silliman** labeled "post avant" is I think a multipurpose fiction about which little can be said and a lot can be asserted. And that's the term's power. It's what **Uwe Poerksen** calls a plastic word: florid in connotation, imprecise in denotation.

But even if I did know what a post avant movement was, I probably wouldn't be qualified to answer your question about where it's going. I am not a believer in the dream of literature or the salutary originary power of the imagination or the notion that new stuff is best stuff: it's all new stuff. We just choose to fetishize some of it.

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Whether one movement follows another successfully is really of little interest to me. Whether writing is useful is to my mind a more salient question. So I don't see a third realm possible. There are no possible realms.

As to whether I think of my more ardent poet friends or acquaintances as "fallacious": no. I don't think of people caught within the dream of literature fallacious. I just think they are following the logic of the game they find themselves in. Part of that logic is belief — believing in the religion of literature — and part of that is the pretense not to believe. Performative indifference is part of an avant garde (or, as it's called now, "post avant") symbolic economy, just as the dream of what you call "lasting value" is part of a more established symbolic/financial economy of letters. And the machine has to turn: margin to center; acoustic to electric; Alan to Golding; outlaw to classic. The two different non-desirable-locales, as you call them, depend on each other. Sure you can find a viable third realm if you believe in Santa Claus. And lots of people do — and one can make the flock move this way or that way: there are lots of tactics and strategies for planting one's brand. Take your pick. One can form a group, a "movement" — or go it alone and play the transgressor, the outlaw, the shaman, versions of the sacred heretic: all of these things work. They each have their tactical logic. None of it matters.

I was speaking of a kind of manufactured cusp, a fabricated verbal frontier that we are encouraged to accept as real and even necessary. So, that third realm you speak of is always the next big thing: it is the cusp, the bubble, the next wave. Your question was "where [I] think poetry is going...," specifically whether the term post avant is a "viable... and worthy successor" to lang-po. It's the same impulse relabeled. Lang-po was not itself a viable and worthy successor to confessionalism, nor it to modernism, nor it to the Victorian era, nor it to the literature of post-1848 American democratic nationalism.

But then again, I don't believe time exists either. So take the previous for what it's worth to you.

Instead of where post-avant poetry is going, I find myself these days wondering about why the Flarf movement is so white. Why "post avant" poetries are so white. Why is the Chicago innovative writing scene so white? Why for instance is there so little crossover between the scene surrounding the Palabra Pura reading series in Chicago and the experimental scene (Myopic series or Series A or Danny's Tavern). Why has there historically been so few women in the European and North and Latin American avant garde poetry scenes? Why is the spoken word scene at Nuyorican so much more ethnically and culturally diverse than the St Mark's crowd and why is the spoken word scene in Chicago whiter than white? Why did so few "experimental" poets write anti-war poems? How are some so sycophantic: why do they need an

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iterative white transgressive hero, a Ginsberg, a Spicer, a Berrigan, an Ashbery? or a white masculinely safe heroine, Stein, Moore, Bishop. Why do people keep reading the same writers over and over, even when they're ridiculously boring and shticky and predictable (Ashbery) or they know their poems by heart already? Why do so few study the anthropology and/or sociology of literary scenes?

AF: I agree that white hegemony within the poetry world is, in and of itself, an "undesirable locale," if we want to posit a state-of-affairs as a kind of place. How do you visualize a bridge being made, that might enable a multi-cultural element to be added to the present scenario (sorry for the buzz-word, couldn't resist)? Do you have any strategies that might enable the poetry world to broaden its cultural scope? You teach at ISU; do you buy in to the "think globally act locally" approach, and are there approaches you take in the context of your classroom that reflect an interest in manifestations of diversity, cultural heterogeneity, and the deflection of an assumed, white male canon?

GG: I guess I don't know that I have any answers beyond the obvious, which I offer at the risk of sounding like any of the following is easy: make on the one hand a pointed self-examination (as best as one is able to actually do that) about motives and influences and biases in order to uncover where I might be denying myself some really amazing work; study the sociology and anthropology of literature to better grow beyond the neoromantic fetish of authorship and the modernist fetish of text; and reach outward and into other writing cultures. I think we make/join/encourage hegemonies/big.samenesses because of our incessant habit of valuation. By which I mean we often seem to need/want things to be the same, or enough the same, so that we can better evaluate what surrounds us (or at least exercise/display our discerning taste) rather than constantly dealing with things/situations that defy/challenge our perceptual categories. And so those are some outward-directed practices that will help. But it’s important not to stop there. It’s important to understand that our very affect has broad-ranging political effects. Cultivate affiliative mind-states. Be willing not to be cool. By which I mean, notice and resist the play of power in the field of cultural production, understanding that hipness is merely a performative resistance that is itself a tactic, often marked by sarcasm, used to acquire cultural capital. Cultivate an interpersonal responsiveness and then retain that capacity to be surprised. Easy, right?

I think a really fruitful way of doing the above is to develop a loving heart. A loving heart is an open heart. An open heart catalyzes a flourishing, courageous mind. I do think Emerson is right when he says in "Friendship” that "our intellectual and active powers increase with our affection.

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Daniela Olszewska (Chicago, USA): from *Citizen Jane*

JANE refuses to keep things
classy. She swings that hellish
hand basket of hers toandfro
like a dank demonette.

Orphaned and alkalized, we can
only stand her in increments.
And even then, sorely. A bag
of pseudo-genes with scarlet-ish

tail, JANE is treasonably feasible.
It is clear that she suffers
from delusions of personality.
A maladjusted grandeur.

Hands stylishly gunpowdered,
JANE is burgeoning intolerably –
All full on addendum.
All full on according to plan.

.....

JANE frequently lets loose –
throws operatic tantrums
on the road with our mobile
yellowcake factories.

She splits the genome in half.
A jading of anchors.
She splits the phalanx in thirds.
A real piece of land, mine.

JANE lassoes. JANE ricochets.
She compromises the integrity
of structures. Concretely.

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With a little help from

your more radical elements.

.....

With a face like that.
In a time like this.
JANE sits in a tree.
A fruit-bearing one.

She affixes herself.
Sedulously gemstoned.
And camo-clad, she peels
the skin off her nose.

Spitefully. Thinks to herself
that she is not so much
a people person as she is
a person person.

A serious liability,
covering for a twist
of green and brown
grooved grenade.

.....

In the midst of dressing up
to go messing up
the magistrate’s new curtains,

JANE takes to the notion
that the inside of her toaster
is miked. She’d consult her pet

genie, but he is miked too.
Wired to heads that can store

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more than the traditional three

seconds worth. JANE resolves
to take distance. Thus she takes
haste with ignition and several cans of.

.....

JANE ducks down.
JANE gooses up.

She pretends to play
dead. Under a dumpster

twenty limbic miles
south of Dodge,

JANE asphyxiates
her codecracker parts.

A need to be forcibly
forgotten: JANE wraps up in

her lucky pilot-like jacket
trimmed in two of the best

animals her god
-father, the Kaliningrad

zookeeper willed her upon
his death bedlam.

.....

JANE is this month’s
designated example.
We love but don’t
like her for it.

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Aluminum-banded
and wielding hand
-made hatchets,
we rig JANE’s head up

with proper sedation
helmet. We barbwire
igloos over JANE’s
hexagram-heavy chest.

We siphon off the bad blood.
Because home is where the heart is.
And JANE’s heart is in need
of some serious moving.

Some serious beating clean.

.....

We bombsheltered JANE off.
An overwashed brain.
With two too many.
teeth, JANE cannot
tessellate in red
(in any color)
until she starts calling us
daily just to check in.
Until she starts explaining things
in terms of volts.
In terms of proffering
gracefully.

.....

JANE has come to love echelon.
To appreciate minefield.
JANE archives the -cides.

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Atlases the pogroms.
Things being as they are
nowadays. JANE's advantage
is plaque-able, is trebly Plutonian.
JANE pares the universe down
to a manageable eight.
She is always aiming to please.
Well-trained in good -manship,
she lives in panoptic view.
JANE fulminates, but calmly.
Her heart beats but legibly.
Is not blushing. In thigh high
chambers, JANE is all perfect
timing, ablaze with gametes.

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Ada Limon (NYC, USA): Poem in Three Parts

I. LEAVING FOR LEAVING'S SAKE

Packing the car as if they were punctuating
an old song with too-loud drumbeats,
she was her mother's mother, her moving
mouth turned into a tight twist of, *we're*
moving too slowly, we're losing.
He slammed the trunk with a final cymbal
crash and she folded into the sound, the song
they made boiled up its own lyrics, said,
bring me the road, bring me the thick-black
of nothing, let me swallow the asphalt,
eat that yellow line until it splits me in two—

II. ROADKILL

White car. Woman who looks like
the librarian from elementary school.
Dead squirrel. Rogue redwood. Glare
of every big bad sunrise's pressure

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to keep alive. Stick-shift. Radio.
This is called what? Living. A little
unkind invitation to meet an end-point,
to push through this small town's
generated hum and see someone else's
gas station, someone else's dead squirrel
and name it, *found*.

III. THE EQUATION FOR EMPTINESS

She rests her head on the window wet
with breath and fog just outside
the Harris Ranch on Interstate 5.
She remembers her mother's head
hanging low in her hands at a
rest stop around here somewhere,
her face having lost its scaffolding
of *Okay, we're all okay*, and fallen.
Peel of wind, she pictures the velocity
equation. One must have speed
and direction to calculate anything.
What do we push through? And where to?
In her brain's engine too many past
tenses drag their heavy feet in black
tunnels, slow the globe's spin.
She wants to be empty, the night
before it's broken by an owl's screech,
that one moment at dawn at some
roadside Red Lion Inn where you
forget where you are, and how far
you've come to get there, your mind
gone white-hot clean before thousands
of wet hands, the fat lip at the reservoir,
the closet floor, the dead cat, the dead,
come in and enter with the blinds pulled
back. She thinks she could go farther
faster without the drag of what she carries;
nothing but her body's own quiet
insistence to accelerate—

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